



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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April 8, 2009

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe   
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – LIFECIRCLE  
UNLIMITED, INC. – LIFECIRCLE GROUP HOME**

We have completed a review of Lifecircle Group Home (Group Home or Agency) operated by Lifecircle Unlimited, Incorporated. The Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

Lifecircle Group Home is a six-bed facility, which provides care for boys ages 12-17 years who exhibit behavioral, social and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Lifecircle Unlimited Group Home was providing services for six DCFS children.

Lifecircle Group Home is located in the Fifth District.

**Scope of Review**

The purpose of the review is to determine whether the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement. In addition, the review covers basic child safety and licensing issues and includes an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, employee records, a facility inspection and interviews with children placed in the Group Home at the time of the review. Interviews with children are designed to obtain their perspectives on the

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*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

program services provided by the Agency and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

### **Summary of Findings**

Generally, the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement, except for a few deficient areas. For example, the Group Home needs to maintain an appropriate back yard lawn and repair or replace items in the home. The Group Home also needs to include input from the treatment team and the child in the development and implementation of the Needs and Services Plans. In addition, the Group Home needs to maintain current court authorizations for all children taking psychotropic medications, and ensure that all children receiving psychotropic medication are routinely evaluated by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Attached is a detailed report of the review.

### **Review of Report**

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. In response to the recommendations made in the report, the Agency's management completed a corrective action plan (attached) which we approved. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:MMO:DC:AA:dl

### **Attachments**

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer  
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, DCFS  
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, DCFS  
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, DCFS  
Robert B. Taylor, Chief Probation Officer  
DeWayne Winrow, PhD, Board Chair and Executive Director, Lifecircle Unlimited, Inc.  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee

**Lifecircle Unlimited, Inc.  
Lifecircle Group Home  
Sylmar, California 91342  
License Number: 198204244  
Rate Classification Level: 12**

**I. Facility and Environment**

**Method of assessment – Observation**

**Comments:**

Lifecircle Unlimited Group Home is located in a residential community. The exterior of the Group Home is well maintained. The front yard is clean and adequately landscaped. However, the back yard lawn is sparse and worn and the sprinkler system is broken.

The interior of the Group Home is well maintained. The common quarters are neat and clean. There is adequate furniture and lighting in the Group Home. The Group Home provides a home-like environment. However, the left burners of the stove are broken and the cabinet door above the stove is not securely attached.

Children's bedrooms are well maintained. The rooms are clean and orderly and have age-appropriate personalized decorations. There is adequate lighting and storage space. Window coverings and window screens are in good repair. The beds all have a full complement of linens and children's sleeping arrangements are appropriate. However, the dresser in bedroom two is damaged and the mattress in bedroom one is sagging.

The Group Home maintains age-appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, a TV and a DVD player. Books and resource materials, including computers with a variety of programs, are also available.

The Group Home maintains a sufficient supply of perishable and non perishable foods.

**Recommendations**

**1. Lifecircle Unlimited management:**

- a. **Provide and maintain an appropriate back yard lawn and repair the sprinkler system.**
- b. **Repair the burners on the stove.**
- c. **Securely reattach the cabinet door above the stove.**

- d. Replace the dresser in bedroom two.
- e. Replace the mattress in bedroom one.

## **II. Program Services**

### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews**

**Sample size: Two**

#### **Comments:**

Children meet the Group Home's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Children are assessed for needed services within thirty days of placement.

The Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) are current, comprehensive and include short and long term goals. However, input from all members of the treatment team and the child is not included in the development and implementation of the NSPs.

Case files reflect adequate documentation to show that children are receiving treatment services.

#### **Recommendation**

2. Lifecircle Unlimited management include input from the treatment team and the child in the development and implementation of the Needs and Services Plans.

## **III. Educational and Emancipation Services**

### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews**

**Sample size: Two**

#### **Comments:**

Children are attending school. Children are provided with educational support and resources to meet their educational needs and are progressing satisfactorily in school. The Group Home's program includes the development of children's daily living, self-help and survival skills.

Children are provided with opportunities to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

**Recommendation**

There are no recommendations for this section.

**IV. Recreation and Activities**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews**

**Sample size: Two**

**Comments:**

The Group Home provides children with sufficient recreational activities and leisure time. Children are provided with opportunities to participate in planning activities. Children also participate in extra-curricular, enrichment and social activities in which they have an interest. The Group Home provides transportation to and from the activities.

**Recommendation**

There are no recommendations for this section.

**V. Psychotropic Medication**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents**

**Comments:**

Children are informed about their psychotropic medication and are aware of their right to refuse medication. Medication distribution logs are properly maintained. However, some of the children did not have current court authorizations for psychotropic medication and are not routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

**Recommendations****3. Lifecircle Unlimited management:**

- a. Maintain current court authorizations for all children taking psychotropic medication.
- b. Maintain documentation that all children taking psychotropic medication are routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

**VI. Personal Rights****Method of assessment – Interviews with children****Sample size: Two****Comments:**

Children are informed about the Group Home's policies and procedures. Children report that they feel safe in the Group Home and are provided with appropriate staff supervision. Children express satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with staff and report that the staff treats them with respect and dignity.

Children report that they are assigned chores that are reasonable and not too demanding. Children are allowed to make and receive personal telephone calls, send and receive unopened mail and have private visitors. Children attend religious services of their choice.

Children report that the discipline policies are consistently enforced and that there are fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Children report satisfaction with meals and snacks. Children also receive voluntary medical, dental and psychiatric care.

**Recommendation**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

**VII. Clothing and Allowance****Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews****Sample size: Two****Comments:**

The Group Home provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity and the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance to children. Clothing provided to children is of good quality and of sufficient quantity. However, not all children are provided with opportunities to shop and select their own clothes.

The Group Home provides children with the required minimum weekly allowance. Children spend their allowances as they choose.

The Group Home provides children with adequate personal care items. Children are also encouraged and assisted in creating and maintaining photo albums/life books.

**Recommendation**

- 4. Lifecircle Unlimited management provide all children with opportunities to shop and select their own clothes.**

**VIII. Personnel Background Checks**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents**

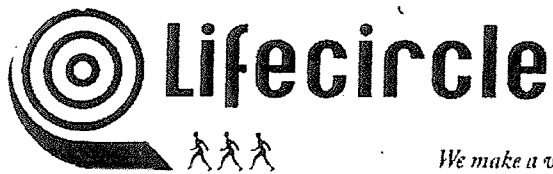
**Sample size: Seven**

**Comments:**

The Group Home has obtained the required criminal and child abuse clearances for their employees.

**Recommendation**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**



*We make a way when there's no way™  
That's the circle of life.*

Lifecircle Unlimited Inc.  
Lifecircle Group Home

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January 16, 2009

## **Corrective Action Plan for Lifecircles Group Home**

### **I. Facility and Environment**

#### Recommendations

#### **1. Lifecircles Unlimited management:**

- a. Provide and maintain an appropriate lawn and repair the sprinkler system in the backyard.

Status:

Maintain appropriate lawn in the backyard: (Implemented) Director planted grass seed in the backyard on 1/2/09. Director placed fertilizer in the backyard on 1/12/09.

Repair the sprinkler system in the backyard: (Implemented) Rainbow sprinklers were installed on 1/21/09.

Plan to prevent reoccurrence: Director will check the lawn weekly. If the grass turns brown, she will water more often. If this is not successful, she will plant more seed and fertilize again. If the proceeding steps are not successful, she will retain the services of the gardener.

Person responsible for implementing corrective action: Mamie Nelson, Director, Lifecircles Group Home.



Person responsible for monitoring to ensure corrective action remains implemented and is working as intended: Loretta Cogan, Social Worker, Lifecircles Group Home.

b. Repair the burners on the stove.

Status: (Implemented) The Gas Company was called and they repaired the burners.

Plan to prevent reoccurrence: Director will check the stove weekly. If any burners are not working, she will call the Gas Company immediately.

Person responsible: Group Home Director

Person responsible for monitoring: Group Home Social Worker.

c. Appropriately secure the cabinet door above the stove.

Status: (Implemented) The cabinet door above the stove has been secured by Lifecircles' Maintenance Worker.

Plan to prevent reoccurrence: Director will check the cabinet doors weekly. If any doors are insecure, she will call the Maintenance Worker immediately.

Person responsible: Group Home Director.

Person responsible for monitoring: Group Home Social Worker.

d. Replace the damaged dresser in bedroom two.

Status: (Implemented) The dresser was replaced on 1/15/09.

Plan to prevent reoccurrence: Director will check all dressers weekly.  
If any dresser is damaged, it will either be repaired by the  
Maintenance Worker or replaced.

Person responsible: Group Home Director

Person responsible for monitoring: Group Home Social Worker

e. Replace the damaged mattress in bedroom one.

Status: (Implemented) The damaged mattress was replaced on  
12/19/09.

Plan to prevent reoccurrence: Director will check the mattresses  
weekly. If any mattress is in poor shape, she will replace it  
immediately.

Person responsible: Group Home Director.

Person responsible for monitoring: Group Home Social Worker.

## II. Program Services

### Recommendation

2. Lifecircles Unlimited management include input from the treatment team and the child in the development and implementation of the Needs and Services Plans.

Status: (Implemented) Each time a Needs and Services Plan is due to be written, Lifecircles Group Home holds a team meeting consisting of the child and all the people involved in the child's life to develop his goals for the next three months.

Plan to prevent reoccurrence: Two weeks prior to the due date of the Needs and Services Plan, a letter goes out to the child's CSW, CASA, Therapist, parent and any other person involved in the child's life requesting them to attend a team meeting to develop his goals.

Person responsible: Group Home Social Worker.

Person responsible for monitoring: Group Home Director.

V. Psychotropic Medication

Recommendations

3. Lifecircles Unlimited management:

- a. Maintain current court authorizations for children taking psychotropic medication.

Status: (Implemented) Lifecircles Group Home maintains current court authorizations for children taking psychotropic medication by requesting authorizations from their psychiatrists one month in advance of expiration dates.

Plan to prevent reoccurrence: Group Home Social Worker will keep track of expiration dates and inform the Director one month in advance. Director will then call the child's psychiatrist to request a new authorization.

Persons responsible: Group Home Social Worker and Director.

Persons monitoring: Group Home Social Worker and Director.

- b. Maintain documentation to show that children taking psychotropic medications are routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Status: (Implemented) Lifecircles makes sure that all children taking psychotropic medication are seen by their psychiatrist at least once per month and that these visits are documented.

Plan to prevent reoccurrence: Director is responsible for making the monthly psychiatric appointments and for making sure they are documented.

(In the case that was audited, a child who spoke Farsi fluently and English poorly was seen every other month by the only psychiatrist we could find who had a Farsi translator. Although, the psychiatrist was asked to see the child monthly, he only agreed to see the child every other month. However, he did communicate with the child's Farsi speaking therapist regularly.)

Person responsible: Group Home Director.

Person responsible for monitoring: Group Home Social Worker.

## VII. Clothing and Allowance

### Recommendation

- 4. Lifecircles Unlimited management provide children with monthly opportunities to shop and select their own clothes.

Status: (Implemented) Children at Lifecircles have monthly opportunities to shop and select their own clothes.

Plan to prevent reoccurrence: On a monthly basis, Director chooses a Staff to take each child shopping and the child may choose his own clothes.

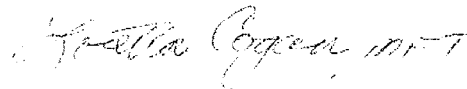
(In the case that was audited, the child was new to the Group Home and was taken shopping for a school uniform. He had arrived with a great deal of regular clothing.)

Persons responsible: Director and Staff

Person responsible for monitoring: Group Home Social Worker



Mamie Nelson, Director,  
Lifecircles Group Home



Loretta Cogan, MFT  
Social Worker,  
Lifecircles Group Home